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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MINNESOTA

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Minnesota

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Minnesota Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Each year Minnesota WS addresses a wide range of wildlife-related problems throughout the State. In Minnesota, most WS activities fall into four main categories: protecting livestock from predators, preventing or minimizing damage caused by beaver, reducing wildlife-related hazards at airports, and providing technical assistance to individuals and organizations experiencing nuisance wildlife problems.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Investigating complaints of wolf depredations on cattle, horses, sheep, poultry, and dogs and implementing nonlethal and lethal methods to reduce this predation
- Conducting wildlife hazard assessments and evaluations for airports and implementing wildlife damage control techniques at airports
- Removing beaver and beaver dams from areas where they are damaging private property, flooding roads and timber, and impacting fish and wildlife habitat
- Providing technical assistance and equipment to cooperators experiencing nuisance wildlife problems
- Assisting cooperators in obtaining necessary permits for alleviating damage caused by federally protected migratory birds

Top 5 Research Projects of Interest to Minnesota:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to sunflowers and starling damage to feedlots and dairies
- Managing predators through new methods to protect livestock and wildlife
- Protecting timber and forest resources from beaver damage
- Preventing the transmission of wildlife diseases to other wildlife and humans



Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Livestock and Domestic Animals from Wolf

Predation—One of the primary functions of Minnesota WS has been to assist livestock producers and pet owners experiencing losses due to wolf depredation. Each year, WS receives 100 to 250 complaints about wolves harassing, killing or wounding livestock and domestic animals, including cattle, horses, sheep, poultry, and dogs. Once a WS specialist verifies that a wolf is responsible for a livestock loss or the death of a domestic pet, WS captures and removes the wolf. The WS wolf-livestock depredation management program in Minnesota also provides the opportunity to test new wolf capture equipment, such as tranquilizer trap devices, foot snares, and breakaway neck snares. Such research and testing is increasingly important as WS continues to develop more humane and efficient capture methods.

Protecting Air Travel—Protecting air travelers and crews from aircraft collisions with wildlife is another important function of the Minnesota WS program. Since 1998, WS has conducted nine

single-visit wildlife hazard evaluations, and implemented year-long wildlife hazard assessments at seven Minnesota airports. WS also reviews airport construction and expansion projects for potential wildlife-related hazards. The increasing number of cooperative requests for WS' assistance has led to additional WS personnel being stationed in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area.

In addition, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH Field Station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

Beaver Damage Management—In 1997, WS began conducting beaver damage management projects in cooperation with a wide range of constituents, and currently completes 10-20 beaver damage management projects annually. WS removes beavers and dams in areas where they are damaging private property, flooding roads and timber, and impacting fish and wildlife habitat.

Looking to the Future

Responding to an increasing number of requests for assistance is an on-going challenge for Minnesota WS. As the wolf population in the State continues to expand into more areas, the need for WS' professional assistance is expected to increase even more.



The growing need for wildlife disease management is also an issue for Minnesota. In 2002, Minnesota verified West Nile virus (WNV) in birds, horses, and humans while chronic wasting disease (CWD) was found at a captive elk farm. In the neighboring state of Wisconsin, CWD has been detected in both captive and wild white-tailed deer. Wildlife diseases such as WNV and CWD are of serious concern to the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Board of Animal Health, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. WS will likely provide assistance to these agencies in monitoring or managing these wildlife diseases as funding becomes available.

Minnesota Wildlife Services Funding ●●●●●●●●●●

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

